

## **Lake City Native finds her way home**

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Front page with picture of Ms. Reissener

Things have come full-circle for Nancy Reissener.

Since May, she has settled into her new position as the associate director of the Lake City Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Her job includes providing management oversight at the local division.

She also supervises human resource management, medical administration, the office of public affairs, voluntary, social work and patient services.

Before taking the Lake City position, Reissener served as the deputy network director for the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8) in Bay Pines.

Yet, the move to Columbia County wasn't difficult for her. It was more of a homecoming.

Reissener was born to Robert and Virginia Weaver in Lake City's own Shands at Lake Shore. She learned to swim at the Ichetucknee, was involved in youth group at First Presbyterian Church and played flute in the band.

After graduating from Columbia High School in 1971, she studied nursing at Florida State University.

Immediately after she graduated from college, Reissener started her career with the VA as a graduate nurse on a postoperative surgical unit. Later, while attending graduate school at the University of Florida, she worked as nursing supervisor for medicine and psychiatry and supervisor for the cardiac catheterization lab. Her father owned the J. Robert Weaver Funeral Home and her uncle owned Weaver's Food Store.

She said that Lake City looks far different from the town she remembers.

"We didn't even have a McDonalds back then; it was all small, family owned business," she said. "Seeing the faces I grew up with is great; even though we all look a little different, our hearts are all the same."

Even when she and her husband, Stewart, moved to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean for a year, she still thought of home.

The couple traveled across Europe and then lived on the island of Crete for a time.

"The sand at the beaches there is dark because it is volcanic," she said.

The Reisseners utilized their French, Greek, and German skills while traveling. Being there was similar to here because of the feeling of living in a small town or village and making so many friendships," she said.

Reissener said that working with a staff so committed to patient care makes her job worthwhile. She enjoys walking down the halls and learning the names of all the staff and speaking with the patients.

"Hopefully they enjoy getting to know me too," she said.

While she said most of the feedback is positive Reissener learns what improvements are needed based on any complaints.

"We are a critical piece of a large health system," she said. "We offer the vast majority of the geriatrics and extended care for the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System.

One of her first assignments was to work on building up specialty programs.

Currently, she is preparing for a major renovation program planned to start in August. It will include turning four-bedroom rooms into two-bedroom and single bedroom to improve the inpatient capacity of the facility.

She is also hiring staff for new spinal cord injury and disorder clinic at Lake City VAMC. The Gainesville clinic is already serving patients.

The new clinic will focus on the medical, emotional, and social needs of veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders.

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, of which Lake City is a component, served more than 10,000 new patients last year and has served over 7,500 new patients through June of this year.

"We are one of the fastest growing in the VA system," she said.

One of her biggest challenges is staying current and looking for ways to constantly improve, while knowing what is urgent and what can be achieved at a less rapid pace, she said.

Yet, she is meeting all challenges head-on.

“She is terrific and truly qualified to be associate director anywhere,” said Fred L. Malphurs, director of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System. “Her experience allowed her to get exposed to all levels of health care; she knows what it takes to make hospitals tick.”

Coming from a family full of veterans makes Reissener value her job even more.

Her father earned a Bronze Star in World War II and her brother, Lt. Col. Water T. Weaver of the U.S.

Army Reserve, served in Operation Iraqi Freedom as a transportation officer.

“The greatest reward is being able to give great care to our veterans, who are not just patients, but men and women who fought for our freedom,” Reissener said.